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Drugs, guns, and terrorists.

K.G.B. CONNECTIONS

THE REVELATIONS about the possible complicity of the Bulgarian secret police in the shooting of the Pope have produced a grudging admission, even in previously skeptical quarters, that the Soviet Union may be involved in international terrorism. Some patterns have emerged in the past few years that tell us something about the extent to which the Kremlin may use terrorism as an instrument of policy. A great deal of information has lately come to light, some of it accurate, some of it not. One of the most interesting developments appears to be the emergence of a close working relationship between organized crime (especially drug smugglers and dealers) and some of the principal groups in the terrorist network. This embrace can be found in at least three countries: Turkey, Italy, and Cuba. In what follows I have checked what seemed to be the most suggestive information about the relationship: I have confirmed the claims attributed to other journalists, and information stated without attribution represents material I gathered on my own.

"In recent years," said Marvin Kalb in the NBC "White Paper" broadcast last September 21, using weapons and propaganda "the Soviet Union has sought to destabilize Turkey, a huge effort that cost more than $1 billion, supporting both right- and left-wing terrorism." The Turkish case is also the first to come to light in which disciplined terrorist organizations worked closely with drug smugglers on a large scale. This alliance was forged by the early '70s in Turkey, and it provided the network through which Mehmet Ali Agca—the Turk who shot Pope John Paul II—fled Turkey for the comforts of the Hotel Vitosha in Sofia, Bulgaria. Here, according to Kalb, he met a fellow Turk, Omer Mersan, "a key figure in a huge drug smuggling and gun-running operation controlled Mafia-style by yet another Turk, Abuzer Ugurlu, known as 'The Godfather.'" Kalb interviewed Ugur Memcu, one of the leading Turkish experts on Bulgaria's role in drug smuggling. Memcu told Kalb that "the Turkish Mafia is responsible for the smuggling originating in Bulgaria, and therefore it would be right to claim that there is collusion between the Bulgarian authorities and the members of the Turkish Mafia based in Bulgaria." And as every authority on the K.G.B.—from former Bulgarian intelligence officials to former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski—has observed, it is inconceivable that activities on such a scale could have taken place without Soviet approval.

The same pattern developed in Italy some years later. For a long time an alliance between the Red Brigades and organized criminals was unthinkable. The Brigadiers always claimed to play a purely political role, and Mafia plays a conservative role in Italian politics. It is intensely anti-Communist, and it remembers the help it got from the Americans during World War II; besides, terrorism was bad for business, since it put more cops on the street, which put a damper on more traditional forms of criminal activity. With the kidnaping of Aldo Moro, however, the Mafia quietly offered assistance to the Italian government (an offer it refused, since the price—guarantees of "spheres of free influence" for the Mafia—was too high).

During the Moro affair or shortly thereafter, the Red Brigades established links to organized crime. By the time of the Dozier kidnapping last year, the connection was well enough established that Italian investigators hunted for the American general through two channels: the terrorist organization and the drug pipeline. According to highly placed sources in the Italian government, it was information from narcotics dealers that finally led Italian police to Dozier's captors. Indeed, among the positive results of the Dozier affair was the discovery of a mammoth drug-running operation in northern Italy, which is currently under investigation by Judge Carlo Palermo. This month 41 people will go on trial in Trent, accused of trafficking in drugs, arms, and money between Italy and the Middle East. According to articles in such reliable Italian newspapers as *La Stampa, Il Giornale Nuovo,* and *Il Corriere della Sera,* a Bulgarian import-export firm, Kintex, is at the center of the investigations, which reportedly have found evidence of drugs and arms smuggling through Bulgarian and Syrian intermediaries (the central figure in the case is a Syrian named Henry Arsan, now in jail in Italy), and terrorist activities.

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